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deeply indebted to it. For it has done the service of emphasizing the need of concreteness in philosophy, of relation to actual contemporary fact, and of an expression free from ambiguous technicalities.

Modern idealism in particular owes gratitude to pragmatism. For modern idealism has been in danger of floating off into the supernaturalism with which pragmatism charges it. And pragmatism, with its emphasis on the specific and factual, will help bring it back. For pragmatism is the expression of the one part of idealism, the element of actualism. The question for pragmatism is, can one part stand alone?

PHYLLIS ACKERMAN.

NEW YORK CITY.

SOCIETIES

NEW YORK BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

THE New York Branch of the American Psychological Association met in conjunction with the Section of Anthropology and Psychology of the New York Academy of Sciences, on Monday, February 25, at 8 P.M. in the psychological laboratory of Columbia University. The following papers were presented.

The Influence of Practise on Correlation of Abilities.—GEORGINA STICKLAND.

The relative lowness of correlations found by most investigators may be caused, according to Professor Hollingworth, by the fact that initial ability (which is affected by such factors as chance variability, inequality of previous practise, *etc.*) rather than final capacity has been measured. In the present experiment an attempt was made to measure an approach to final capacity. A homogeneous group of fifteen college women practised color-naming, tapping, adding, mental multiplication, and word-building tests for one hour a week for eight or nine weeks. Correlations between average records were computed at different points of the practise period. A gradual increase in coefficients was found which was followed by a slight decrease toward the end of the experiment. Multiplying—the most difficult test in which least approximation was made to a practise limit—correlated least well. Individuals' best records—the most accurate index of final capacity—showed a relatively high correlation. Practise curves showed an initial rise and a subsequent lowering, which latter occurred at the same point as did the decrease in coefficients. It seemed to the experimenter that there might be a causal

relation of some sort between these phenomena. Where practise improves performance, correlations increase. Where there is a slump in effort, interest—where accidental causes lower proficiency—or where something approaching a practise level has been reached, coefficients remain as they were, or show a slight decrease.

The similarity of the subjects and the dissimilarity of the tests made these results fairly convincing. But the small number of subjects used make it impossible to form, on the basis of this experiment, any definite theory. Further work which is now being carried on along this same line may serve to confirm or disqualify the hypothesis advanced here.

A Psychological Analysis of Play.—CLARA F. CHASSELL.

Readiness of neurones, as defined by Professor Thorndike, has been adopted as the least ambiguous term to utilize in a definition of play. Activity is accompanied by readiness of neurones as a continuous variable ranging from negative through neutral, or zero, to positive readiness; but only that activity which involves positive readiness of neurones is play. Whether one response or another will follow from any given stimulus, other things being equal, depends solely upon the relation between the readiness of the neurone systems involved. Factors influencing readiness are maturity, sex, race, family, environment, habit, instinct, mental set, physiological changes, and intensity of stimuli. Most obvious of these, perhaps, is mental set, or attitude, in terms of which it would be possible to formulate a complementary analysis of play.

Preferably, work may be thought of in terms of product produced (Thorndike). Thus drudgery, considered as activity of neurone systems unready to conduct—not work—is the antithesis of play. Further, recreation and fatigue, from the standpoint of a single synaptic series, may be considered antithetical terms.

From the pedagogical standpoint, this analysis of play finds sanction in the current doctrine of interest. The modern school seeks to increase the satisfactions actually involved in school processes.

A Note on a Mathematical Prodigy.—LORLE I. STECHER.

A boy aged six years and seven months was examined at the Mental Clinic, New York City Children's Hospital and School at Randalls Island. This child who graded seven years and five months by the Stanford Revision of the Binet with an I.Q. of 113, was able to add long columns of 1 and 2 digit numbers as fast as he heard them pronounced, and to subtract with equal rapidity. He had had only one month's instruction at school, therefore this facility in

mental arithmetic was spontaneously developed. With the exception of one brother, he was the only child in a large family whose mentality judged by school progress was above the average. The family history showed on the father's side a number of individuals of good mentality, including numerous rabbis and one person supposed to be mathematically inclined. His performance, although remarkable for a six-year-old child, hardly compares with the recorded arithmetical feats of such prodigies as Ampère and Gauss.

Families of American Men of Science.—R. BRIMHALL.

A continuation of a study begun by Professor J. McKeen Cattell of the distinguished relatives of a group of 1,000 of the most distinguished American men of science. The number of distinguished relatives in each degree of relationship not beyond second cousins, except in special families, and degree of distinction are being determined. Degree of distinction is being determined by biographical accounts of individuals in "American Men of Science," "Who's Who in America" and Appleton's "Cyclopedia of American Biography." In the last named case, the amount of space given to the biography is used as a measure of degree of distinction. Already, some four hundred relatives not more remote than first cousins have been recorded according to these standards. The relatives of the wives of the men of science are being treated according to the same method.

Redintegrative Mechanisms in the Psychoneuroses.—H. L. HOLLINGWORTH.

Reference was made to various attempts to formulate in psychological terms the symptoms of the psychoneuroses. Special attention was called to the psychoanalytic concepts, such as symbolism, transfer, siphoning, *etc.* Cases were cited from normal perception and learning, from primitive magic, from illusions, and from esthetic reaction, showing the importance of a type of reaction which represents a combination of Hamilton's "redintegration" and Thorndike's "partial activity." The "conditioned reflex" was shown to be a typical case of this mechanism. In general the mechanism takes the following form. Some definite reaction, of speech, conduct, emotion, *etc.*, follows upon a total stimulus or situation. Thereafter the occurrence of a portion of the original stimulus serves to reinstate the reaction previously associated with the larger situation. Clinical examples suggested that this mechanism adequately formulates many of the symptoms of the psychoneuroses in a much clearer way than do the concepts of symbolism, transfer, siphoning, *etc.* Adequate control of this mechanism is what is called sagacity. Sagacity and

intelligence were distinguished. Amentia is a lack of intelligence, whereas hysteria is a lack of sagacity.

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Manuel de Psychiatrie. J. ROUGUES DE FURSAC. Cinquième Edition. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan. 1917. Pp. 509.

Treatises on psychiatry may be divided into several classes—*viz.*:

1. Systems of psychiatry of a really creative and constructive type, like Kraepelin's work with its successive modifications and additions.

2. The less elaborate text-book, yet still bearing the stamp of originality, such as the treatises of Krafft-Ebing, Tanzi and Biachi.

3. Contributions to psychiatry which are interpretative rather than descriptive of mental disorders, such as Bleuler's monumental works on dementia præcox and schizophrenic negativism and Freud's interpretation of the paranoiac mechanism.

4. Text-books intended primarily for the student, where interpretation is sacrificed for description and where mental diseases are more or less classified like a botanical herbarium. It is to this latter class that the book under review belongs.

The fact that this book has gone through five editions in the original and several editions in English translation attests to its popularity, and for a brief treatise on mental disorders, written with the usual clearness of French medical works, we know of no more satisfactory work. Its chief fault is that it is too descriptive and not sufficiently interpretative and is apt to leave the student with a feeling that mental diseases are cut and dried entities like different varieties of trees and that the symptoms of mental diseases are the more or less haphazard and accidental vagaries of a disordered mind. Modern psychiatric analyses have shown that the content of a psychosis is not a wild and disordered outbreak of mental symptoms, but is either the logical outcome of a failure to adapt the personality to new situations in life or arises from circumstances and conditions of which the individual is unaware, that is, an unconscious mechanism. Careful psychological analyses can establish these principles beyond a doubt, such as the reviewer has done, for instance, the psychoanalysis of the somnambulism of Lady Macbeth.

Psychiatry has long ago passed the point of mere clinical description and attempts at various classifications, since the former was